

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 837

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3796

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, SHUM, NU

SUBJECT: FATHER EVERISTO BERTRAND

REF: MANAGUA 3177 AND 3128.

1. DURING AUGUST 10 MEETING WITH SOMOZA, I RAISED THE QUESTION OF GON'S DENIAL OF ENTRANCE TO NICARAGUA OF CAPUCHIN FATHER EVERISTO BERTRAND, A U.S. CITIZEN, WHO WAS ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES.

2. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE GON HAD INCRIMINATING INFORMATION ABOUT HIM, AND HIS ACTIVITIES IN NICARAGUA. I ASKED SOMOZA IF IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO OBTAIN INFORMATION, EVEN IN A GENERALIZED FORM, ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EVIDENCE. I ADDED THAT WE ANTICIPATED FURTHER PROBLEMS WITH THE CAPUCHIN MISSIONERS OVER THE BERTRAND CASE, BOTH IN NICARAGUA AND OUTSIDE. IT WAS IN THE INTEREST OF NICARAGUA, AT THIS PARTICULAR CONJUNCTURE, NOT TO PROVOKE ADDITIONAL CRITICISM OF CHURCH GROUPS, WHO MIGHT WELL ARGUE THAT IT WAS AN ARBITRARY, UNFAIR DECISION, SINCE NO EVIDENCE OF WRONG DOING HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING. FATHER BERTRAND'S TREATMENT HAD CAUSED UNEASINESS IN CHURCH CIRCLES, AND WAS STIMULATING THE CIRCULATION, AND PUBLICATION, OF LETTERS OF SOLIDARITY FROM OTHER MISSIONARY GROUPS IN NICARAGUA.

3. PRESIDENT SOMOZA LISTENED, BUT DID NOT ANSWER. I TOOK HIS SILENCE AS AN INDICATION THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO DISCUSS THE

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MATTER, AND THE SUBJECT WAS DROPPED. HIS RESPONSE DID NOT

INSPIRE ANY CONFIDENCE THAT THE GON WOULD PROVIDE THE EMBASSY,
OR THE CAPUCHINS, WITH INFORMATION CONCERNING THE NATURE OF
THE CHARGES AGAINST FATHER BERTRAND.
THEBERGE

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NNN

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